

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WEIZMANN'S ZIONISM

The Road from Motol to Jerusalem

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CHAIM WEIZMANN has attained the distinction of an elder statesman of the world. Along with Winston Churchill, who is one year younger, Weizmann belongs to the handful of leaders whose careers reach back to the great war of 1914-18 and beyond it to an age which now seems distant and strange to the point of unreality. He has become the unique symbol, both official and popular, and for Gentile as well as for Jew, of the political rebirth of an ancient people, the head of a veritable phoenix. Not only is Chaim Weizmann the first president of the first Jewish state in nearly two thousand years, but he holds that position quite inevitably. The choice of anyone else would have been almost unnatural.

The publication of the autobiography of such a man is an important event; doubly so in this case, since Weizmann has written very little before, although he has spoken much on the public platform and in private conference. But it is difficult to spell out Weizmann in *Trial and Error*. For the book is not a spiritual autobiography in the manner of St. Augustine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, John Stuart Mill, or even our own contem-

porary Bernard Berenson, who wrote their lives as "confessions." Nor is *Trial and Error* the traditional "life and letters" that illumines the past and every actor in it by a sheer mass of recorded conversations, "minutes," memoranda, and exchanges of correspondence. From the dullest of such biographies we learn much, and from the longest-winded of them the most. They are of the stuff of history.

Weizmann's book lacks the quality, and quantity, of revelation. His most palpable aims, his most immediate environment, his laboratory, his statements and proposals and negotiations, his official achievements, are all in it. But he satisfies our appetite less than he whets it, especially our appetite for information about those maneuvers, those conflicts and attritions of strategy and tactics, that have been so largely at the center of his striving.

Trial and Error then is neither a stock-taking of oneself nor a detailed contribution to the record. One can hardly blame Weizmann for this—he is but following the examples of his contemporaries, who have taken to treating autobiography as a looser sort of history: "This is what we have done," they seem to say, "and these are the interesting things that have happened while we were around, not what we have been or have tried to become."

Still more unhappily, Weizmann does himself considerably less than justice. His personal magnetism and charm, his wit and satire, his discrete quality of dreaminess and poetic evocation, the irony and mimicry of his characterizations of foe and friend, the high humor that transcends partisanship and self-consciousness—these have become an oral tradition and legend. But they appear at best in personal conversation, in intimate groups and occasionally on the platform; in this book they are reflected but inadequately. We cannot, accordingly, judge him by the style and manner of *Trial and Error*. For all that he has written an interest-

CHAIM WEIZMANN's autobiography, *Trial and Error*, published after its writer had become the first president of Israel and at a time when Zionism had closed a most important phase of its history, offers the opportunity to view in historical perspective the movement and its philosophy, in the interpretation and emphasis given it by its most distinguished living leader and spokesman. SOLOMON F. BLOOM, associate professor of history at Brooklyn College, here attempts to crystallize out and appraise the basic beliefs and assumptions at the heart of Weizmann's Zionism, as they seem revealed in his own account of his inner convictions and career. Professor Bloom is the author of *The World of Nations*, and has written numerous articles for COMMENTARY and other publications. He is now at work on an interpretative history of Europe and the United States in the last two centuries.

ing and even an absorbing book, Weizmann is no writer. Style is the man only if the man is a craftsman.

The upshot of the matter is that *Trial and Error* is only indirectly and tangentially a book about Chaim Weizmann. He appears in it as the doer, the scientist and the statesman—and one of those statesmen whose unusual fortune it has been to conceive and create states, in his case, alas, a state for others to govern and command. He represents himself as the kind of man to whom his work is his very life. In truth, there isn't much that he has to say about himself in the nearly five hundred pages of his book that isn't also, in fact primarily, about Zionism, at any rate his brand of Zionism.

Trial and Error is in large measure the biography—I was about to say the autobiography—of Zionism according to the gospel of Chaim Weizmann. Therein lies its significance, particularly for Western and American Jews, who in the last few years have, in a burst of devotion and dedication, rushed to the support of what amounts to the uprising of European Jewry against an attempt first to put it out of existence, and then to delay the granting of refuge to the handful who survived. Under the circumstances, it was altogether natural and fitting that Jews, and not a few non-Jews, outside the benighted continent should have supported Weizmann's Zionist proposal without stopping, for the moment, to consider the wider meaning of his Zionism as an ideology and view of life, of history, and of Judaism. They have become, many of them, if one may say so, "ists" without the "ism." The time has come to begin to look at the "ism" itself and Weizmann's book provides the occasion.

AN ABSOLUTE and utter commitment to the Jewry of the Pale of Settlement of old Russia is at the root of Weizmann's life and philosophy. Weizmann has the sense of "belonging," the want of which haunts the emancipated Jew and even more the assimilated Jew in his new home. Most of us are in between. A conscious loyalty, a deliberate partisanship in the recent catastrophe, a feeling of historical coherence, these have grown stronger rather than weaker lately. But there are doubts and searchings as to the character of Jewish culture, the role of the Jew, the validity of nationalism, the viability of re-

ligion, as to nearly everything. If we are caught offguard, there is some absent-mindedness regarding our true spiritual origins: we are a spontaneous generation. In Weizmann there is no doubt and the generation of Weizmann is defined forever. Nothing in *Trial and Error* is as warm as the evocation of the land of his childhood. It is the fond return of the nostalgic exile. The "half-townlet, half-village" of Motol, the large family, the lifelong family retainer and tyrant, the institutionalized mother, the *cheder* surrounded by deep mud in the summer and deeper snow in the winter, the alternation of traditional rabbi and enlightened rabbi, traditional uncle and enlightened uncle, the old and the new synagogues—that is the "typical Pale, typical countryside," the rock to which Weizmann is fixed.

At the age of eleven, he tells us, "I left the townlet of my birth and went out 'into the world'—that is, to Pinsk—to enter a Russian school; which was something not done until that time by any Motolite. From Motol to Pinsk was a matter of six Russian miles, or twenty-five English miles; but in terms of intellectual displacement the distance was astronomical." The first Motolite at large, first in Pinsk, then in Berlin, Geneva, Manchester, and points west, south, and north, spied out the land. Did he find, like Moses' spies, a land of milk and honey; or like Joshua's a harlot's house and fear in the hearts of the Earthmen? It was difficult for Weizmann to judge, for he had brought with him the twin to the sense of belonging to a small and isolated community—a sense of separation from the rest of mankind and the rest of the world, and even from the rest of the Jews.

This second sense was bred into him from the cradle. He tells us that his father's business kept him away from a growing family most of the time. But the phenomenon of separation was collective more than personal. The whole Pale of Settlement, he cries out, was a "prison house created by Czarist Russia for the largest part of its Jewish population. Throughout the centuries alternations of bitter oppression and comparative freedom—how comparative a free people would hardly understand—had deepened the consciousness of exile in these scattered communities." Tucked away in "one of the darkest and most forlorn corners" of the Pale, the prison

cell of Motol belongs to another planet. "Communication with the outside world was precarious and intermittent. No railway, no metaled road, passed within twenty miles of us. There was no post office." Very occasionally a stale Hebrew newspaper arrived from the Earth. "To us, of course," reports Weizmann, "the news would be fresh. To tell the truth, we were not much interested in what was taking place in the world outside. It did not concern us particularly. If we were interested at all it was in the Hebrew presentation of the news."

"CHAIML" was a boy of seven when the notorious pogroms of 1881 broke out. "These had not reached us in Motol, but they had shaken the whole Jewish world to its foundations. I was a child, and I had lived in the separateness of the Jewish life of our townlet. Non-Jews were for me something peripheral."

Jew and peasant felt highly irrelevant to each other, and yet their activities were vitally intermingled. That was the paradox underlying the position of Eastern Jewry. In speaking of Weizmann's early environment, Maurice Samuel has observed that the "dramatic contrast between the land-rooted life of the Gentiles and the culture-rooted life of the Jews pointed the character of the Jewish position much more sharply than in the city." While the village Gentiles "prayed for rain for their own well-plowed fields, the Jews fantastically prayed for rain periods seasonable for semi-tropical Palestine." For the city Jew the deprivation of land-ownership was theoretical; "the country Jew saw his neighbors enjoying to the full a tacit intimacy with nature which was withheld from him. And while it was being withheld from him by discriminatory laws, he accentuated the separation by his dream-like preoccupation with the far-off soil of his origin."

Weizmann himself is perhaps closer to the ground when he emphasizes, though in rather conventional terms, the role of the Jew as agrarian middleman: "... the economic structure of this part of the country, and the history of its growth, did not encourage good relations between Jews and peasants. There were many great estates, usually owned by Poles. The Polish landowners had about them numbers of Jews,

who acted as their factors, bought their timber, rented some of the land or leased the lakes for fishing. The Poles constituted a Junker class, though in my time their wings were already being clipped by the Russians. Inherently they were hostile to the Jews, but under the common Czarist oppression they assumed a kindlier attitude. The peasants, however, had no point of direct contact with the landed gentry; the Jews stood between the two classes. The Jews were therefore the only visible instrument of the exploiting nobility. Still, the exploitation did not produce the same disastrous effects as elsewhere, for this was a landed peasantry."

He might have added that the Jews were performing, though not alone and exclusively, the important functions of handicraft and exchange. These brought the Jews and the peasants, that is, the bulk of the population, into an intimate association, much more so than in the West. The elder Weizmann was a contractor who managed the cutting and transporting of timber down the Vistula to Danzig. There was between him and the "fifty or sixty men he employed seasonally—moujiks of Motol and the neighborhood—an excellent relationship, primitive but warm and patriarchal. Once or twice he was attacked by robbers, but they were beaten off by his workmen." In little Motol two hundred Jewish families lived in the closest proximity to twice their number of White Russians, and just across the lake there were villages for which Motol was metropolis.

Weizmann is therefore quite right in saying that the spiritual separation was more striking than the physical or economic. The Jews and the peasants, he points out, were "strangers to each other's ways of thought, to each other's dreams, religious festivals, and even languages." The separation became absolute when people were at their most relaxed! "On the Sabbath, and, still more, on the spring and autumn festivals," the non-Jewish world was "practically excluded from our consciousness." Even in the larger town of Pinsk nearby, where he received his secondary school training, young Weizmann had no personal contact whatever with Gentiles.

Throughout, Weizmann speaks of Gentiles as a species apart. There were no pogroms in Motol, but "we did not have to live in the midst of pogroms to experience

their social effects, or to know that the Gentile world was poisoned. I knew little of Gentiles, but they became to me, from very early on, the symbols of the menacing forces against which I should have to butt with all my young strength in order to make my way in life. The acquisition of knowledge was not for us so much a normal process of education as the storing up of weapons in an arsenal by means of which we hoped later to be able to hold our own in a hostile world."

This sense of exclusion, and not the longing for Zion, became the major premise of Weizmannism. It is interesting to notice that the first mention of Zionism in *Trial and Error* occurs in juxtaposition to the division between the Jewish and peasant worlds: "We were separated from the peasants by a whole inner universe of memories and experiences. In my early childhood Zionist ideas and aspirations were already awake in Russian Jewry."

THUS bred, the sense of separation radiates and luxuriates. It reappears in the ineradicable distinction Weizmann draws between Eastern Jewry and Western Jewry, between Zionist and non-Zionist, and between Judaism and the rest of the world.

His reaction to the German Jewish community, the first that he saw upon leaving Russia at the age of eighteen, was instantaneous. The self-deprecatory, defensive attitude went against his grain. The religious atmosphere "lacked warmth and gaiety and color and intimacy." "It was stuffy, it was unreal, it had no folk background." The dismissal is sweeping. With invincible charm he reports that his "Pinsk Yiddish which, like most Russian Jews, I had taken to be next door to High German, turned out to be incomprehensible to the Germans—very much to my astonishment and resentment." The principal of a Jewish boarding school, where Weizmann taught and starved a while, "took his Judaism to mean that in all respects save that of a religious ritual he was as German, in culture, background, and personality, as any descendant of the Cerusci." He claimed his niche in the national world as "a German of the Mosaic persuasion."

Although Weizmann was no "Russian of the Mosaic persuasion," even that would have been better. It seemed to him already,

then, that German anti-Semitism was "heavy, solid, bookish . . . far more deadly, in the long run, than the mob anti-Semitism of Russian city hooligans and the cynical exploitation of it practiced by Russian politicians and prelates." A kind of learned prejudice worked itself into the German "national consciousness. Even Dr. Barness [the principal] could not ignore the evidence of Jew-hatred about him. But he regarded it as the result of a slight misunderstanding. If some Germans were anti-Semitically inclined, it was because they did not know the sterling qualities of the Jews, as exemplified in Dr. Barness and his like. They had to be told—that was all. A little enlightenment, judiciously applied, and anti-Semitism would simply vanish." We hear an echo of Motol and Pinsk in the conclusion that the gap between Berlin Jewry and the Russian-Jewish colony was "almost unbridgeable."

It was a clash between extremes. It is therefore much more significant to notice that Weizmann's attitude toward other Western Jewries, while milder, was still uncompromising. "I might say," he remarks of his negotiations in England during the First World War, "that it was always easier to speak frankly to non-Jews than to Western Jews; there was less likelihood of being misunderstood." He does show a little generosity toward those non-Zionist who, like the late Louis Marshall and Felix M. Warburg, betrayed eventually a good deal of sympathy for the development of Palestine; but he cannot forbear to comment that Palestine had by then "ceased to be a matter for theoretical debate," and had become "a living reality" which it was "impossible to oppose." But also for intra-Zionist politics he uses the conception of East and West as polar and even antipodean. Theodor Herzl, Max Nordau, Louis D. Brandeis, were all Westerners, and between them and Weizmann, so he assures us again and again, lay the transcendent gulf between a merely "schematic" and a truly "organic" Zionism.

The fact is that Weizmann is not merely opposed to what he calls the West—he is not interested in it; and further, in a man of his temperament, the opposition is too intransigent to be purely theoretical. His judgment of these men has that deepest lack of sympathy which is characteristic of the incurious. Herzl is described as proposing a Jewish

homeland without a Jewish culture; and he committed the final sin of accepting the substitute of "a remote, unknown African territory [Uganda] for the glory of the historic Jewish homeland." Herzl's contribution was great but, "apart from his personal example, that of form." Max Nordau's attitude toward Eastern European Jews is put down as patronizing, his conception of anti-Semitism as "different from ours," and his Zionism was grandiose but facile and unrealistic. He was "an ardent Zionist only during the sessions of the Congresses."

Louis D. Brandeis and his comrade Jacob de Haas were "political" and "practical" Zionists in turn, but evidently in the wrong turn. Weizmann assesses Brandeis as "upright and austere" but also doctrinaire: "... like Wilson, he was apt to evolve theories, based on the highest principles, from his inner consciousness, and then expect the facts to fit in with them." This is quite amusing, for Weizmann and Brandeis are both typical empirical men, much alike temperamentally.

Weizmann is too intense a politician to appreciate his opponents, whether they hail from East or West. In 1946 he was defeated by Ben Gurion and Abba Hillel Silver. It was characteristic of him to reflect that Zionism then stood at the "nadir" of its fortunes. Back in 1931 Nahum Sokolow had momentarily supplanted him in the presidency of the Zionist Organization. "When [the election] was finished," Weizmann writes, "and some tactless person applauded my so-called downfall, the feeling came over me that here and now the tablets of the law should be broken, though I had neither the strength nor the moral stature of the great lawgiver!"

DESPITE such aberrations of political passion, Weizmann's twin sense of commitment and separation has armored him well for the political struggle. He knew he was a Jew before he could explain why or how, and his statement of faith has a blunt and naive quality: "I was never anything but Jewish, I could not conceive that a Jew could be anything else. It was very strange for me to hear Mr. Jamal Husseini, speaking for the Arab side at Lake Success, declare that the Jews were not Jews at all; they were Khazars, or Tartars, or God knows what. I answered simply: 'I feel like a Jew and I have suffered like a Jew.'" There are, we

hope, better scientific answers, but hardly any better political or psychological.

He feels thoroughly and inseparably at one with Eastern Jewish life as it is enshrined in his conception and memory. The late Rabbi Stephen S. Wise quoted him as saying quite characteristically: "When Herzl or Nordau blundered, the Ghetto forbore to reproach a once truant and now penitent son; but let me make the slightest mistake and the Ghetto rises with a single shout: 'Weizmann, bist meshuga—are you crazy?'"

To this sense of unquestioned commitment, Weizmann added a protean sense of the expedient. He is the greatest exponent of practical Zionism, which is of course undefinable, being a policy, and only by remote implication a philosophy. It is the policy of recognizing unpleasant facts, of respecting unsurmountable obstacles, of infinite adjustments and bargains, even at the cost of consistency—in short, the policy of keeping going in a certain direction even if the road ahead is not straight or even visible, and, if you have to stand still, of simulating motion by marking time loudly and demonstratively. Weizmann has been compromiser, trader, bargainer, even haggler. He is a very able bargainer, and everybody likes to do a lot of what he does well. Of course every virtue has its peculiar excess. You may begin to bargain about things, go on to bargain about ideas, and end up bargaining about bargains.

But Weizmann is in good company. He belongs to the tradition of George Savile, first Marquess of Halifax, the great "Trimmer" of the last Stuarts and the Glorious Revolution of 1688. It was his business, said Halifax, to keep the boat steady, while others tried to weigh it down on either side, and he called Nature and God to witness that he was doing their work. He cried out "that our climate is a Trimmer between that part of the world where men are roasted and the other where they are frozen; that our Church is a Trimmer between the frenzy of fanatic visions and the lethargic ignorance of Popish dreams; that our laws are Trimmers between the excesses of unbounded power and the extravagance of liberty not enough restrained; that true virtue hath ever been thought Trimmer, and to have its dwelling in the middle between two extremes; that even God Almighty Himself is

divided between His two great attributes, His Mercy and His Justice. In such company, our Trimmer is not ashamed of his name. . . ."

Nor need Weizmann be ashamed of the results of his practical Zionism. His maneuvers during the First World War, between British statesmanship and an Eastern Jewry hidden from view by two lines of trenches, were instinctual, agile, and sure. His perception, then and later, that Zionism must lean on the West was just as natural as it was valid, although it has led him too often to recommend Palestine as a client and outpost of the British Empire. His undoc-trinaire approach yielded further returns. In 1924, in a "diplomatic" statement, he refused to declare himself on the form of the political community in Palestine. "Some people think [it] may be a state, some a commonwealth; and other people something else." And then follows a typical inconclusion: "But it will be a natural sequence of the efforts of the Jews." Equally cogent was Weizmann's early acceptance of partition. "I know," he said in 1939, when the proposal was first broached in the White Paper, "that God promised Palestine to the children of Israel, but I do not know what boundaries He set."

Such uncertainty is the surest sign of divine inspiration. Even the developments of the last several years, in which Weizmann's more adventurous opponents rather than himself have played the leading role, are, by a familiar historic irony, a justification of practical Zionism. For it was by an inordinate regard for brute realities, an overflowing respect for recalcitrances, an adjournment of consistency, and a preference for the logic of events and measures over the logic of their professed principles, in short by practical statesmanship in the spirit of Weizmannism, that his more ideologically rigorous critics have been able to achieve his veiled dream of a Jewish state and his ideal of a stronger position for further bargaining with a sharp world.

BY ALL practical standards, therefore, Weizmann has been an able and effective and devoted leader, and were his public reputation based on his political achievements alone our account might well stop here. In a sense it does, for what fol-

lows concerns itself less with Weizmann as statesman than with the validity of the ideology which accompanies his policy, and with the public image of him. What is that image? Weizmann has not been in Eastern Europe much since his youth; he received his university training in Germany and Switzerland; he has spent half his life as a professor of chemistry in Manchester; and has achieved his greatest successes, notably the issue of the Balfour Declaration, through his close relations and contacts with British statesmen. He therefore appears as an Eastern Jew who, without the least tincture of assimilationism, is thoroughly at home in Western society and civilization, let alone in Western Judaism. Indeed the world, I think, sees Weizmann as the very embodiment of the synthesis of East and West, of tradition and modernity, of idealism and science. He is seer as well as statesman. He is the Jew as such, the universal Jew.

Does this need to be demonstrated? To Felix Frankfurter, for example, Weizmann represents the confluence of the "ethical and intellectual forces" of the Greek and the Hebraic traditions, "at once an East European Jew and a Western Zionist," and his view is not uncommon. "He is a Jew. He is *the Jew*," Ludwig Lewisohn has exclaimed.

Certainly Weizmann is an authentic Jew, by any standard. But he is not *the Jew*; perhaps there is none such. And he is neither the representative Eastern Jew, nor his blend with Western civilization. From the first he is estopped by being too much the partisan and politician, and from the second by being too empirical- and practical-minded.

By presuming an identity between Judaism and Zionism, and by setting off too distinctly and sharply Eastern Jewry from Western, Weizmann arrogates to himself a monopoly of representation. The only true Jew is the Zionist, the only true Zionist is the Weizmannian. It is not easy to discover, to begin with, precisely what his Judaism consists of, aside from being a factor in the vital equation, and the reasons are perhaps inherent in the *genre* to which Weizmann's autobiography belongs. We are brought up sharply now and then, for example, by such remarks as that Vladimir Jabotinsky exhibited "a certain queer and irrelevant knightliness, which was not at all Jewish." What depths do not possibly lurk here! Don Quix-

ote is as typically Jewish as the business man around the corner: certainly we would read out of the fold too many Jews if we read out our excellent and foolish knights.

Weizmann's attitude toward Western Judaism—or Westernizing Jews—is more obvious, but, insofar as it is conscious and deliberate, it is governed too much by the early opposition of Western Jews, or their leaders, to Zionism. Yet his own family, back East in Motol, was divided on the issue. His mother would say neutrally: "Whatever happens, I shall be well off. If Shemuel [Chaim's revolutionary brother] is right, we shall all be happy in Russia; and if Chaim is right, then I shall go to live in Palestine." Chaim is entitled to his triumph (by the way, he never tells us what became of the revolutionary branch of the Weizmanns): "I will not undertake to say who was right, but she spent her last years very happily in Palestine—along with most of her family."

And, after all, since the great emigration of the 1880's, East and West have become somewhat confused with each other. There is now an Eastern-Jewish *American* community, and America is in the West in more than a physical sense. If the "territorialist" movement was originally led by the Western anti-Zionist Israel Zangwill, and even smiled upon for a moment by the Western Zionist Herzl, it is now led from New York by the Eastern, and Orthodox, ex-Commissar of Justice of the Soviet Union, I. N. Steinberg. George Plekhanov used to say that the members of the Jewish Socialist Bund of Russia were really "Zionists who were afraid of seasickness," but many of them found the stormier Atlantic passage quite endurable. The Bundists had other and better reasons for not accepting Zionism. No, Jewry in general and even the Pale were too kaleidoscopic to find their typical embodiment in anyone and least of all in a party-man. There were among the Jews socialists as well as Zionists, socialistic and religious as well as "practical" Zionists, internationalists as well as nationalists, and useless and wonderful *luftmenshen* and able intellectuals, as well as substantial burghers.

OF WESTERN ways Weizmann has learned much and quickly, as quickly and as much as a man can who never stops to ex-

amine his ends. For Weizmann has the shortcomings as well as the virtues of the "practical man" *par excellence*, that famous fugitive from reality. A practical man in doubt of his aim is a contradiction in terms. Sure of his ground, he only needs the information and details with which to persuade his woolier and less single-minded fellows. He likes to attack each problem as though it had no related problems, and to cut it down to manageable size, laboratory-fashion. But when it balks, nobody can be more mystical and romantic than your "practical man."

The Trimmer Halifax was more fortunate than the practical Weizmann, for his trimming was shored up and supplemented by the philosophy of John Locke, who was not too eager to square himself with the established and accepted facts. He thought it desirable, for example, to establish the doctrine of the consent of the governed by showing that governments originated in a social contract. But history reared up: only a few governments were ever so founded. Locke therefore dismissed history with a nod—"an argument from what has been to what should be of right [is] of no great force." In short, an intermittent rejection of the world as it is, is the beginning of wisdom. The difficulty with Weizmann is that he accepts the world as given, like inert matter in the laboratory, and conceives the problem to be what to do *with* it, and not what to do *about* it.

Consider what happens when a problem such as anti-Semitism is treated in the spirit of a rational chemistry: "The Aliens Bill in England [which placed difficulties in the path of immigrating Jews] and the movement which grew up around it were natural phenomena which might have been foreseen. They were a repetition of a phenomenon only too familiar in our history. *Whenever the quantity of Jews in any country reaches the saturation point, that country reacts against them.* [My italics—S.F.B.] In the early years of this century Whitechapel and the great industrial centers of England were in that sense [what sense?—S.F.B.] saturated. The fact that the actual number of Jews in England, and even their proportion to the total population, was smaller than in other countries was irrelevant; the determining factor in this matter is not the solubility of the Jews, but the solvent power of the country. England had reached the point where

she could or would absorb so many Jews and no more. English Jews were prepared to be absorbed in larger numbers. The reaction against this cannot be looked upon as anti-Semitism in the ordinary or vulgar sense of that word; it is a universal social and economic concomitant of Jewish emigration, and we cannot shake it off."

How simple must be the problems with which a certain class of laboratory technician deals! A change in quantity, of Jews, leads to a change in quality, of anti-Semitism. The only thing that is left to be done is to determine scientifically the "saturation point" of each country. In the "Quantity Theory" of anti-Semitism, the spiritual remnant becomes a statistical left-over and for that Palestine must be available.

This is what comes from regarding the Gentile world as an undifferentiated mass in which Jews are a "foreign body." Weizmann, in short, accents anti-Semitism as an unanalyzable, brute fact. "*Herr Doktor*," he exclaimed in his youth to his German Jewish school principal, "if a man has a piece of something in his eye, he doesn't want to know whether it's a piece of mud or a piece of gold. He just wants to get it out!" "*Herr Doktor* was speechless"—but he need not have been. Gold doesn't ordinarily get spattered in one's eye and the difference between mud and gold is quite interesting, and not least of all to a chemist.

IN HIS attitude toward terror, does Weizmann represent a "Western" view, a "Jewish" view, or merely his own amalgam of strategy and tactics? When civilized people resort to systematic terror, "something is rotten in the state of Denmark." William Wordsworth gave expression to the classic attitude in his reaction to the September massacres during the French Revolution:

When a taunt

*Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
Saying, 'Behold the harvest that we reap
From popular government and equality,'
I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
Of wild belief engrafted on their name
By false philosophy had caused the woe,
But a terrific reservoir of guilt
And ignorance filled up from age to age,
That could no longer hold its loathsome
charge*

But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

The same view is mirrored in the brittle determinism of Karl Marx. When Russian terrorists assassinated Czar Alexander II in 1881, Marx, who was of course opposed to personal terror, wrote that "their *modus operandi* is a specifically Russian and historically inevitable method about which there is no more reason to moralize—for or against—than there is about the earthquake in Chios."

Weizmann adhered to this view and then faltered. He declared before the Palestine Royal Commission in 1936 that he had always "fought destructive tendencies in Jewry; but it is almost impossible to avoid destructive tendencies amongst the younger generation unless some hope is given . . . that one day, some day in the distant future, one in ten, one in five, one in twenty, will find a refuge somewhere. . . ." But, unlike Marx and the young Wordsworth, Weizmann is also a nationalist: he had to hang his head "in shame" at the "un-Jewish" excesses. He had never believed that "the Messiah would come to the sound of high explosives." (What an ironic commentary on his own work in explosives and Zionism during the First World War!) And then he summed up his attitude quite characteristically: "I have said that the terrorist groups in Palestine represented a grave danger to the whole future of the Jewish state. Actually their behavior has been next door to anarchy. The analogy which is usually drawn between these groups and what happened in Ireland or South Africa presents only a half truth. It leaves out of account that one fundamental fact with which the Jews have to reckon primarily; namely that they have many hostages all over the world. And although Palestine is the primary consideration, it must not, it has no right to, endanger the situation of Jews outside of Palestine. Apart from which it must be remembered that after all the building of Palestine will depend to a large extent on the good will of the Jews outside."

Does Weizmann speak here as the last and greatest of the *shtadlonim*, the intercessor with the English great? The English great understood him better than he them. The view of Arthur James Balfour, the conservative leader, that Zionism, being a traditionalist movement, would tend to strengthen

conservatism in the world, was shrewder than Weizmann's ascription of the interest of English statesmen in Palestine to their religious convictions. He writes that "... men like Balfour, Churchill, Lloyd George, were deeply religious, and believed in the Bible. ... To them the return of the Jewish people to Palestine was a reality, so that we Zionists represented to them a great tradition for which they had enormous respect." Can it be that Weizmann is naive? He was impressed, for example, by Lloyd George's familiarity with Biblical geographic names; but does he not know that the study and reading of the Bible is the greatest single source of English literature and education, secular and clerical, agnostic and believing? And was there ever a temperament less religious, in any sense you please, than "the little Welshman's"?

He blames powerful British Jews for "that ambiguity of phrasing in the Balfour Declaration which was to plague us for more than a quarter of a century." A "well-to-do, contented and self-satisfied minority, a tiny minority," rebelled against the prospective Declaration and "exerted itself with the utmost fury to prevent the act of restitution from being consummated. Itself in no need—or believing itself to be in no need—of the righting of the ancient historic wrong, this small minority struggled bitterly to deprive the vast majority of the benefits of a unique act of the world conscience; and it succeeded, if not in balking the act of justice, at least in vitiating some of its application."

It is quite natural for a Jewish politician to dispatch his wrath against his Jewish rivals rather than against his Gentile opponents. But is it entirely fair? A comparison with the accounts of David Lloyd George, Sir Mark Sykes, Sir Herbert Samuel, and others, does not completely clarify the responsibility for the precise wording of the Declaration. That Great Britain has imperial interests in Palestine cannot be denied, and such interests made her statesmen always chary of a too autonomous or too Jewish Palestine. It is well to bear in mind that the shrewdest and most cautious and hardest imperial heads were engaged upon this Declaration, upon this single sentence of promise: the utterly penetrating and unimpressionable and cold Balfour, for decades the rapier thrust of the

British Parliament, who relaxed with abstruse problems in speculative philosophy; the calculating and percipient and open-pored Lloyd George, painfully sensitive to every personal and every political nuance—to mention but two of a magnificent team. They were Hobbes's Leviathan, flailing about the globe, impressed and swayed by no one, all the way from Weizmann to Lord Reading.

These were people who knew only too well the difference between promising—no, "viewing with favor," which is different again—and establishing Palestine as "the Jewish national home," let alone a state, and promising "a national home for the Jewish people" "in Palestine." Their homes were stuffed with dictionaries and their heads with surgical distinctions. All the scholastics and all the Talmudists never worried a poor word as relentlessly as they could. Old William of Occam's noun had a much better chance of escaping from the shadowy existence of an algebraical symbol than Balfour's Declaration had of confusing itself with a declaration of independence. There is, in Downing Street, a "Garden for the Raising of Blandiloquous Expressions for Dubious Phenomena," the famous "GRBEDP." Why does Weizmann think that, in the last century, these people have been detouring around the word *state*, preferring *commonwealth* and that supernal circumlocution, that gem which lights up the gray area between the dread words *empire* and *colony*, that buffer between colliding sovereignties—*dominion*? The "GRBEDP" is even now breeding a name that would describe a republic (India) that "recognizes" a king and is associated in a "Commonwealth" with other nations that bear allegiance to him. It is hard even for a Jew to be cleverer than such *goyim*. No, these people never slipped—when they said *a* home *in* Palestine they meant that, not a tittle more, and possibly two tittles less. Which is, of course, no news to Weizmann and to Eastern as well as Western Jews.

To condemn British imperialism is not necessarily to condemn the Zionist bargain with it. The road of the Jewish people met the road of the Empire, not to merge, but perhaps only to run parallel for a little while and then part and diverge. So we hope. And it is not to condemn a civilization in so many respects so admirable, and a country which is tackling more bravely and soberly

than any other country in the world the principal tasks of our day. It is precisely my point that, whether in its good or bad aspects, Weizmann has not grasped the core of English civilization or of Western civilization as a whole.

THE intellectual self-imprisonment of Chaim Weizmann is not in harmony with the Western spirit. There is a strange unconcern in *Trial and Error* with a multitude of problems that are quite relevant to the Zionist, and certainly to modern man. The European experience is not assessed. The Jews, as it happens, have lived in Europe almost as long as they lived, in ancient times, in the Near East: they are, most of them, Europeans, not Asiatics or Orientals. Surely they are bringing to Palestine some things their ancestors did not take from there. Their contribution to Western civilization, of which Weizmann is proud, is not unrelated to their extraordinary position in European society. Of that very little is said in *Trial and Error*. Along with other Europeans, many of them migrated to the United States. A majority of the surviving Jews are now there, and most of them seem at present inclined to remain there. Of the problems of this community, which may also become a source of reciprocal inspiration with Palestine as well as the exchequer that it now is—and that it should continue to be as long as is necessary—Weizmann seems unaware, if we can judge him by *Trial and Error*.

Nor is this all. Modern Zionism arose with and indeed, on the whole, after many another European nationalism. The Irish were reviving Gaelic, the Czechs Czech, and the Ukrainians Ukrainian, when the Hebrew Renaissance blossomed. There is no discussion of these other movements, and no awareness of the meaning and function of nationalism as a whole, or of the possible, perhaps already impending, transformation of that portentous movement in the future. The Jews are an original people, but they are not as original as all that. Century after century, both Germans and Jews migrated to Central and Eastern Europe, settled in isolated communities amid alien populations, worshiped their gods amid antagonistic religions, and together fertilized commerce and industry in regions otherwise largely agrarian. Jews acted out with the Germans a his-

torical play of which the denouement of Hitlerism was but the last act, the act that turned it into a horrible tragedy. Of this strange and curiously interlinked fate, no word here.

And what of the difficult role of the small nation and state in the modern world? Thomas Masaryk attempted an answer or two, and at any rate he recognized it as a searching question. It is really not enough for Weizmann to affirm his "deep conviction that God has always chosen small countries through which to convey His messages to humanity." Perhaps. Nothing is more clear than that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. It was, I think, Thomas Carlyle's conviction that when the Lord wants to do something especially great, he chooses the stupidest people to do it. He has sent some walloping statements through nations as large as France and the United States. Lately he has taken to dispatching messages through nations like the Germans—a warning of the meaning of totalitarianism—with the difference that the messengers seem for the first time to be unaware of the import of their own message!

THERE is, finally, a subtle and latent anti-intellectualism in *Trial and Error*. Quite justifiably, Weizmann inveighs against a certain vaporish learning. He brought with him "out of Russia a dread of the 'eternal student' type, the impractical idealist without roots in the worldly struggle, a figure only too familiar in the Jewish world of forty and fifty years ago." Later he concluded rather sweepingly that "just as the rich Jews never came to us until we were a 'practical' proposition, so these intellectually rich Jews thought that Palestine would be detrimental to their careers." They were too worldly, then. But Weizmann's attitude goes deeper. He remarks at one point that he has "little interest in affairs outside Zionism and chemistry." And what can we make of the cultural attitude expressed in this description of the learned *luftmensh*: "His field was the 'humanities,' the kind of material—history, philosophy, literature, 'things in general'—which one can take up, drop, take up again, vague and attractive subjects to which the bright type of 'eternal student' was usually drawn."

I am afraid that Weizmann has yielded to the conventional fantasy that so-called practical work is alone difficult, exacting, or pro-

ductive. A new country may indeed need farmers, and carpenters, and chemists, but no one need deceive himself that intellectual work is not more enduring, more productive, and of course more difficult. Intellectuals turn to "productive" work as a relaxation and practical men are driven neurotic by intellectual work.

WEIZMANN'S view of the world at large clearly lacks the cogency and vibrancy of his view of practical Zionist issues. His brand of Zionism, regarded as ideology, seems inadequate as an inspiration for the

modern Jew who, whether in or outside Palestine, is searching for new answers to new problems. It is an ideology that understates the value of the European experience, over-stresses the notion of "exile," and ignores the interesting dilemmas of non-Zionist Jews. It treats non-Jewish mankind too much as an opaque and undifferentiated object. The Lord created the world and its many nations long before he made the covenant with Abraham: "... walk thou before me, and be thou whole." If the Gentiles have chosen to ignore his covenant, let us not ignore his creation.

AFTER RECOGNITION

JACKSON MacLOW

WITH drooping wings the angels sit
Among the florid vegetation.
Some fiery swords half-hearted hold:
Hear: joyous angels wail in desolation!

The air is cold without, although
The garden, like a celebration,
Burns still brightly on, and gray
The light, despite the keen illumination

There, within.

O angels, weep, weep!
Till garden steam to swamp
And mists obscure the rays
That mock you as you pass,
Or sit, among the trees,
Plaining your distress
In tones unearthly sweet,
Unearthly desolate.

JACKSON MacLOW was born in Chicago in 1922. He has written poetry for *New Horizons*, *Accent*, *Retort*, the *Yale Poetry Review*, and other magazines. Mr. MacLow is at present living in New York City and has just completed a volume of verse, *The Sphinx in the Pyramid*.